Structuring Public Education

Spring 2002

An Amalgamation/Restructuring Guide for School Divisions

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 3

A. The Foundation of Restructuring 4

- Outlines the foundational principle of education in Saskatchewan and the context for the current restructuring initiative; and,
- Includes an overview of the *Guide*.

1. Leadership Approach, Objective and Principles 4

- Describes the leadership approach of Government, the involvement of the education partners, the main objective of restructuring and the nine guiding principles.

2. Ensuring the Highest Quality of Educational Programs and Services 6

- Describes what is meant by a high quality of education, outlines the goals of education and provides topics and questions to consider in examining the educational services provided.

3. Public Involvement in the Restructuring Process 10

- Outlines the importance of involving the public and stakeholders throughout the restructuring process; and,
- Provides suggestions on whom to contact and methods of involvement.

4. Roles 11

- Outlines the roles of the major organizations and stakeholders involved in Saskatchewan's education system.

5. Restructuring Possibilities 12

- Briefly describes the range of restructuring options.

6. Parent and Community Involvement in Education 14

- Summarizes the options available to ensure parent and community involvement; and,
- Includes a brief description of district boards of trustees and local school advisory committees.

B. The Building Blocks of Restructuring 15

- Describes the restructuring process as a series of building blocks that take the school division from the initial steps of exploring issues to the consolidation of services; and,
- Includes a diagram, summarizing the major steps.

1. Exploring the Key Elements and Options 15

- Describes two key steps: Explore the Key Elements and Identify Options; also provides specific suggestions.

2. Decision Making 18

- Highlights the decision-making process and the steps involved if restructuring is pursued.

3. Restructuring 19

- Outlines the decisions and actions that boards of education will make in order to restructure. These decisions have been categorized into:
  - The Transition Framework;
  - Employees;
  - Request to the Minister of Learning; and,
  - Administration.

4. Consolidating Services 27

- Outlines the decisions that a newly elected board needs to make, including:
  - Team Building;
  - Policy Development;
  - Employee Contracts and Agreements;
  - Clarification of Roles;
  - Consolidation of Educational and Administrative Services; and,
  - Parent and Community Involvement in Education.

Appendices: 32

Appendix A: Comparison with Other Provinces 33

Appendix B: School^{PLUS}: *Securing Saskatchewan's Future, Ensuring the Wellbeing and Educational Success of Saskatchewan's Children and Youth: Provincial Response to the Role of the School Task Force Final Report* 34

Appendix C: Principles of Core Curriculum 35

Appendix D: Legislative Provisions 38

Appendix E: Communication 46

Appendix F: Sample Request to the Minister of Learning 48

Appendix G: References 50

INTRODUCTION

A foundational principle shared by all within Saskatchewan's education system is providing a high quality education for all children and youth, no matter where they live. Saskatchewan's young people need access to an education that allows them to fully reach their potential and meaningfully participate in society.

Today's society is complex, presenting both opportunities and challenges. One of these challenges is evaluating the structure of the public education system in light of continuous enrolment decline. The past 8 to 10 years has seen a reduction in the number of school divisions across Canada (please see Apendix A). While in Saskatchewan the number of school divisions has decreased from 119 in 1996 to 99 in 2001, there is still a need for further reductions. The table below illustrates the large number of school divisions with fewer than 1000 students.

2001 Enrolment	
Enrolment	**Number of School Divisions**
Over 10,000 students	4
3,001 – 10,000 students	6
2,001 – 3,000 students	7
1,001 – 2,000 students	29
500 – 1,000 students	30
Under 500 students	23
Total	**99**

Restructuring Saskatchewan's education system is an important process that involves everyone who has a shared responsibility in providing high quality education for children and youth. The Government of Saskatchewan and the Restructuring Coordinating Committee are committed to providing strong leadership in supporting and encouraging the restructuring of school divisions to enhance educational opportunities for students.

This guide is a revised edition of the *Structuring Public Education for the New Century, Ensuring Quality Education for Saskatchewan Students: A Guide* released in June 1997. The main revisions include updating legislative and policy references and reflecting Government's Response to the Task Force on the Role of the School Final Report, *Securing Saskatchewan's Future, Ensuring the Wellbeing and Educational Success of Saskatchewan's Children and Youth* (please see Appendix B). It will be helpful to boards of education, administrators, teachers, non-teaching employees, parents, and members of district boards of trustees and local school advisory committees as they participate in the restructuring process.

The guide provides an overview of Saskatchewan's leadership approach, objective and principles of restructuring. It suggests processes and procedures from the initial exploration of restructuring through to the consolidation of policies and services. The appendices provide a range of helpful information, including the legislative provisions concerning restructuring and guidelines for effective communication.

Saskatchewan Learning's Regional Directors are available to help with restructuring plans and discussions. Boards of education are encouraged to contact their Regional Director as soon as possible for information and assistance. In addition, the provincial education partner organizations are available to assist their members in restructuring discussions and processes.

Providing Assistance

Saskatchewan Learning and the provincial education partners involved in the Restructuring Coordinating Committee will provide restructuring support to school divisions. The Restructuring Coordination Committee is comprised of representatives from the following organizations:

- **CUPE**
- **LEADS**
- **SASBO**
- **SASC**
- **STF**
- **SSTA**
- **Saskatchewan Learning**

A. THE FOUNDATION OF RESTRUCTURING

This section of the guide provides the foundation for any restructuring initiative. It has been organized into the following sub-sections:

1. **Leadership Approach, Objective and Principles;**
2. **Ensuring the Highest Quality of Educational Programs and Services;**
3. **Public Involvement in the Restructuring Process;**
4. **Roles;**
5. **Restructuring Possibilities; and,**
6. **Parent and Community Involvement in Education.**

1. Leadership Approach, Objective and Principles

"We applaud the government's willingness to let boards of education determine the path of restructuring. We also encourage boards of education to begin exploring those paths. ... the SSTA Executive will be discussing any role it may play in assisting boards."

(John Nikolejsin, SSTA President, SSTA Annual Convention, November 2001)

Leadership Approach

The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to providing strong leadership in supporting and encouraging the restructuring of school divisions to enhance educational opportunities for children and youth. Saskatchewan Learning will provide advice and assistance to boards of education, as well as coordination at the provincial and regional levels. Resources, such as a brochure describing the benefits of amalgamation/restructuring as identified by school divisions, has been developed for distribution in Spring 2002. Saskatchewan Learning has also committed to providing financial assistance to help cover the costs associated with restructuring that takes place in time for the Fall 2003 Local Elections. Where possible, the Department will remove barriers that inhibit restructuring.

Through the Restructuring Coordinating Committee, the education partners have also committed to providing strong leadership within their organizations to ensure that Saskatchewan's education system is effectively structured.

This provincial leadership will be balanced with local determination, recognizing that boards of education have the primary role in school division restructuring.

Objective

School division restructuring will be undertaken in order to meet the needs of all children and youth by providing a high quality of education, through a full range of educational programs and services.

Principles

The following principles guide the decisions made and the actions taken toward restructuring:

Focus on Children and Youth: All decisions will be based on the best interests of children and youth. Refer to the Goals of Education described in section A.2.

Cooperation: All changes will be made cooperatively and in partnership with all those who will be affected. These partners include parents, students and other young people, administrators, teachers, support staff and community members in addition to the traditional education partners.

Equity: There is a commitment to appropriate educational opportunity and equity in educational benefit for all children and youth.

Accessibility: Linked to equity, this principle addresses the commitment to ensure that children and youth have access to high quality educational opportunities wherever they live in the province.

Affordability: Provincial and community resources will be used efficiently and effectively. Any efficiencies realized from restructuring will be reallocated to support children, young people and teachers in the classroom.

Respect for Constitutional Rights: The rights of the religious and linguistic minorities, as established in the Canadian Constitution and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, will be acknowledged and respected, and structural change will occur only within their respective systems.

Comprehensiveness: Programs and services must meet the needs of all children and youth. They will be coordinated and integrated through strong links between educational institutions and with human service agencies and business to provide a holistic and seamless range of educational programs and services.

Accountability: The education system is accountable to the people it serves including children, youth, parents and the public.

Excellence: There is a commitment to ensuring that educational programming and services are of the highest quality throughout the province.

Principles

- **Focus on Children and Youth**
- **Cooperation**
- **Equity**
- **Accessibility**
- **Affordability**
- **Respect for Constitutional Rights**
- **Comprehensiveness**
- **Accountability**
- **Excellence**

"While boards of education are interested in building schools, employing staff, transporting students, and arranging to finance these activities, the most crucial area of school board responsibility is the educational program."

(Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, 1995)

2. *Ensuring the Highest Quality of Educational Programs and Services*

What is a High Quality of Education?

The major role of a board of education is to provide a high quality of education for all children and youth. People want their children to acquire the skills and knowledge that will enable them to succeed, and they want a full range of programs and services regardless of where they live in Saskatchewan.

A board of education is expected to provide **access to a comprehensive array**

Goals of Education For Saskatchewan (1984)

Goals of education in Saskatchewan should direct efforts to develop the potential of all students in the province. Education should affirm the worth of each individual and lay the foundation for learning throughout life.

Students benefit from exposure to learning in a variety of situations. Attainment of the goals is a venture the school shares with the students, the home, the church, and the community. Although the degree of school responsibility will vary from community to community, the school has some responsibility for each goal.

A body of knowledge and a range of skills and attitudes are necessary to function in a changing world. It is intended that education will enable Saskatchewan students to do the following to the best of their abilities:

Basic Skills

1. Read, write and compute.
2. Acquire information and meaning through observing, listening, reading and experiencing.
3. Process information through intellectual and technological means.
4. Solve problems by applying basic principles and processes of the sciences, arts and humanities.
5. Communicate ideas through written and spoken language, mathematical symbols and aesthetic expression.

Lifelong Learning

1. Seek and value learning experiences.
2. Act as self-reliant learners.
3. Base actions on the knowledge that it is necessary to learn throughout life.

Understanding and Relating to Others

1. Act on the belief that each individual is worthwhile.
2. Base actions on the recognition that people differ in their values, behaviours and life styles.
3. Interact and feel comfortable with others who are different in race, religion, status or personal attributes.
4. Develop a sense of responsibility toward others.

Self Concept Development

1. Perceive themselves in positive ways.
2. Appreciate their own abilities and limitations.
3. Set and work toward personal goals.
4. Assess praise and criticism realistically.
5. Present themselves with confidence.

of educational programs and services for the children and youth in its school division. This includes:

- supporting the full implementation of the **Core Curriculum** as outlined in Appendix C;
- providing or coordinating the **physical, social, emotional, spiritual and cultural supports** required in order for learning to occur;
- providing **services to support youth in transition** to post-secondary education and training or employment; and,
- encouraging **parent and community involvement in education** at home and in the school.

Positive Life Style

1. Practice appropriate personal hygiene, engage in sufficient physical activity and maintain a nutritionally balanced diet.
2. Avoid harmful use of alcohol and other drugs.
3. Cultivate interests that may be the basis for personal development and leisure pursuits.
4. Recognize the importance of productive activity.
5. Display initiative and pursue tasks diligently.
6. Maintain a safe and healthful community.
7. Respect and seek to enhance the environment.
8. Appreciate beauty in its many natural and constructed forms.
9. Express themselves creatively.

Spiritual Development

1. Seek an understanding of the purpose and worth of human existence.
2. Develop a knowledge of God.
3. Respect family, religion and culture in a pluralistic society.

Career and Consumer Decisions

1. Develop an awareness of career opportunities.
2. Develop interests and abilities in relation to vocational expectations.
3. Adapt to shifts in employment patterns and technology.
4. Make informed consumer decisions.

Membership in Society

1. Assume responsibility for their own actions.
2. Work with others to achieve individual and group goals.
3. Participate in the democratic processes of government and perform the duties of citizenship.
4. Respect the rights and property of others.
5. Act with honesty, integrity, compassion and fairness.
6. Develop a sense of national pride and acknowledge the need for international understanding.
7. Work toward greater social justice.
8. Assume responsibility for dependent persons in a manner consistent with their needs.
9. Respect law and authority.
10. Exercise the right of dissent responsibly.

Growing with Change

1. Work toward immediate and long-term goals.
2. Base actions on an understanding that change is a natural process in society.
3. Select workable alternatives in response to changing conditions.
4. Develop confidence in making decisions involving risk.

"The Government strongly endorses the vision for School^{PLUS} proposed by the Task Force. We agree that the role of schools has changed and that schools today have two primary functions:

- **To educate children and youth – developing the whole child, intellectually, socially, emotionally, spiritually and physically; and,**
- **To support service delivery – schools serve as centres at the community level for the delivery of appropriate social, health, recreation, culture, justice and other services for children and their families."**

(Government of Saskatchewan, 2002)

"Directors of Education and other LEADS members require assistance in developing the skills necessary to facilitate restructuring initiatives."

(Saskatchewan League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents [LEADS], 2002)

Assessing the Quality of Education Provided

The following questions and considerations will be helpful in evaluating the quality of education provided in your school division:

CONSIDERATION	OBSERVATIONS

• What supports, resources and personnel have been provided to ensure full implementation of Core Curriculum, including the Required Areas of Study and the Common Essential Learnings?
  • Have you met the time allocation guidelines put forward by Saskatchewan Learning?
  • Do you provide facilities and supports for teachers and administrators to implement Core Curriculum?
  • Do you provide practical and applied arts programs?	

• What support services are provided?
  • Counselling?
  • Curriculum?
  • Special education?
  • Technologies?
  • Others?	

• To what extent have strategies for establishing equity among students been designed and implemented?	
• Are services provided to meet the needs of children and youth with special challenges?	
• Are enrichment programs provided?	
• Are services provided to meet the needs of Aboriginal children and young people?	
• What socio-economic factors, such as poverty, family breakdown, violence and substance abuse, affect students' ability to learn? • Are services provided to address these factors?	
• What policies, procedures and practices exist to deter children and youth at-risk from dropping out of school and to facilitate the transition back to school for those who have dropped out?	

• What support programs are provided for secondary students?
  • Transition to post-secondary education or training, or to work?
  • Guidance counselling?
  • Access to technology?
  • Work experience?	

• To what extent do your resource centres meet the standards described in *Resource-Based Learning, Policy Guidelines and Responsibilities for Saskatchewan Learning Resource Centres (1987)*, including program, personnel, facilities, collection and budget?	

• Are schools staffed with the number and kinds of personnel necessary for the effective implementation of the educational program and services?
  • Accredited secondary level teachers, e.g., science, math, practical and applied arts?
  • Staff, such as Aboriginal Elders or outreach workers, to meet the diverse needs of children and youth?	

• Are partnerships in place with other organizations and agencies to enhance services for children and youth? • Have partnerships with Aboriginal organizations and communities been established? • Are these partnerships meeting existing needs?	
• How are parents and the community involved in education at the school level? • Do current policies and structures encourage their involvement?	
• How will restructuring improve your ability to offer a broad range of educational programs and services?	
• Will restructuring yield efficiencies?	

"In Saskatchewan, we, too, are wrestling with the need to adjust our society and our economy to a changing world. The 2001 census has provided us with concrete information about fundamental changes in our population and the nature of our province. Urbanization has created declining enrolments in our towns and villages and put in question the future of rural Saskatchewan. In response to changes of this magnitude, the province's educational system has no choice but to adapt itself to the new circumstances and implement well-considered measures to ensure high quality education for all students in the province."

(Derwyn Crozier-Smith, STF General Secretary, STF Spring Conference, April 2002)

3. Public Involvement in the Restructuring Process

Over the years, Saskatchewan's education system has addressed a range of difficult issues. The cornerstones of success in addressing these issues have been cooperation, local decision making and the meaningful participation of all those involved in the education system – students, parents, teachers, administrators, other staff, trustees, partners and the public.

An effective public involvement strategy will be critical at all stages of the restructuring process – from the initial exploration of issues through to making decisions and moving toward a restructured school division.

Boards alone cannot address the challenges facing the education system today. An effective public involvement strategy will be critical at all stages of restructuring – from the initial exploration of issues through to making decisions and moving toward a restructured school division. This public involvement strategy will require careful planning to ensure the meaningful involvement of all.

The steps in planning an effective public involvement strategy include:

- determining who should be involved;
- determining the methods of effective public involvement; and,
- creating a time frame for the public involvement process.

Who Should Be Involved?

When developing a list of those who are to be involved, consider:

- parents;
- students;
- teachers;
- administrators;
- non-teaching staff;
- district boards/local school advisory committees/school councils;
- community members;
- municipal councils;
- First Nations and other Aboriginal agencies;
- businesses;
- neighbouring school divisions;
- post-secondary institutions; and,
- other partners.

During the process you may form committees comprised of the various partners in education. It will be important for these individuals to be formally appointed by the organization that they represent. For example, the local teacher associations should appoint teacher representatives and district board/local school advisory committee members should be appointed by their board/committee.

When considering the ways that the public and partners will become involved, consider the following processes:

- public meetings;
- focus groups;
- surveys; and,
- individual meetings with stakeholder groups.

Topics to Discuss

When planning your public involvement strategy consider discussing a variety of topics including:

- quality of education;
- allocation of resources;
- services for children and youth with diverse needs; and,
- partnerships.

4. Roles

Boards of Education

Boards of education will:

- evaluate restructuring options with the best interests of children and youth in mind;
- engage in a comprehensive and inclusive dialogue with teachers and other employees, parents, other partners, district boards, advisory committees, communities, Aboriginal agencies and organizations, other public entities and neighbouring school divisions about the potential benefits of restructuring;
- ensure their school division is structured in a manner that enables them to offer a broad range of educational services and programs, now and in the future;
- ensure effective involvement of all partner groups; and,
- maintain responsibility for ensuring that the educational interests of children and youth remain paramount as they make decisions about restructuring.

Restructuring Coordinating Committee

The provincial Restructuring Coordinating Committee, established by the Minister, will:

- provide a continuing forum to focus commitment and maintain momentum;
- clarify principles, criteria, guidelines and procedures for restructuring;
- advise on school division action plans to facilitate a reasonably consistent province-wide approach;
- provide specific advice to the government; and,
- provide progress reports.

Educational Boundaries Commission

The Educational Boundaries Commission will:

- make recommendations to the Minister of Learning on school division boundary disputes that have been referred by the Minister.

Designing a Process

Consider the following questions when designing a public involvement process:

How will you keep parents, teachers, other employees, partners, other boards of education and the general public informed and involved throughout the process?

Who will be involved in making recommendations and decisions?

Will your board set up special committees, working groups, etc.?

What will be the role of the committee/working group?

How will you ensure that this involvement is meaningful?

When and how will you involve the public, teachers, other employees, students and other partners?

Will you take any special steps to ensure that people who have not traditionally had a voice are able to participate (e.g., use various means of personal contact, hold meetings at different times and locations to ensure all can attend, providing child care or transportation services, etc.)?

What role will the media have in keeping the public informed and involved?

Saskatchewan Learning

Saskatchewan Learning will:

- provide leadership, support, guidance and advice to school divisions through the department's Regional Directors;
- prepare guides and other support materials to assist in restructuring initiatives;
- provide support to the Restructuring Coordinating Committee; and,
- work in consultation with other provincial government departments and agencies to encourage and facilitate partnerships.

Teachers and Other School Division Employees

Teachers and other school division employees will:

- participate in public discussions held within the school division;
- provide feedback and advice through employee representative organizations at the local and provincial level; and,
- ensure that the educational interests of children and youth are clearly understood and considered in decision making.

Parents and Community Members

Parents and community members will:

- become knowledgeable of the issues surrounding restructuring;
- provide feedback to the board during public discussions; and,
- ensure that the best interests of children and youth are at the forefront of discussions and decisions.

5. Restructuring Possibilities

It is the provincial government's position that any efficiencies realized from restructuring will be reallocated toward services and supports for children and young people.

School division restructuring includes a range of possibilities. The possibilities briefly described below are not mutually exclusive. It will be up to each school division to determine the size and configuration that will best ensure a wide range of educational services. It is the provincial government's position that any efficiencies realized from restructuring will be reallocated toward services and supports for children and young people.

In an amalgamation/restructuring process, school communities may join together in a configuration that makes sense according to today's enrolment, transportation and trading patterns, as well as natural geographic features. The result may be new school division boundaries that look very different from the existing boundaries, or minor readjustments where a few communities or school districts are transferred.

Definition of Amalgamation/Restructuring:

For purposes of financial supports for amalgamation/restructuring initiatives that are to be completed in time for the Fall 2003 elections, these terms are defined as follows:

- **amalgamation:** the establishment of one new school division, created by the joining of two or more present school divisions, or the incorporation of an existing division within the boundaries of one or more other existing school divisions; and,
- **restructuring:** the establishment of one or more new school divisions, created from several present school divisions with new boundaries.

The procedures for revising boundaries are described in greater detail in Appendix D of this document (Legislative Provisions).

Note: Some school divisions may be considering collaborative arrangements with neighbouring divisions in order to share administrative services such as central offices, services of a director of education, secretary-treasurer or other administrative staff, or facilities. As a short-term measure this may provide a number of advantages, including cost effectiveness. However, caution is recommended in using this approach as a long-term direction. Central office staff in these situations report that too much time is spent on duplicated administration, taking away from the evaluation and improvement of the educational program.

Boards of education may wish to explore partnerships with other authorities such as municipalities, First Nations, post-secondary institutions, district health boards, libraries and community groups and organizations. These partnerships might include sharing administrative services, joint use of facilities, integrated school-linked services, and other creative arrangements to make efficient and effective use of resources and to provide a high quality of education.

Examples of Amalgamation/Restructuring

On January 1, 1997 Blaine Lake School Division disestablished. A portion of the school division (Hafford School District) joined Battlefords School Division. The remaining portion (Leask and Blaine Lake School Districts) joined Saskatchewan Valley School Division.

Several school divisions amalgamated in time for the October 22, 1997 board of education elections:

- Canora and Timberline School Divisions became Crystal Lakes School Division;
- Kerrobert and Wilkie School Divisions became Lands West School Division;
- Long Lake and Last Mountain School Divisions became Sask Central School Division;
- North Battleford and Battleford School Divisions became Battlefords School Division;
- Cxbow and Arcola School Divisions became Souris Moose Mountain School Division;
- Prince Albert Rural, Prince Albert Public, Carlton Comprehensive and Kinistino School Divisions became Saskatchewan Rivers School Division;
- Wood River and Gravelbourg School Divisions and Mankota Our Lady of Fatima RCSSD became Golden Plains School Division; and,
- North Battleford RCSSD, Unity RCSSD and Wilkie RCSSD became North West RCSSD.

In Spring 1998, amendments were made to existing legislation to facilitate the amalgamation of the nine *conseils scolaires* into one central board *(Conseil scolaire fransaskois)*. Full amalgamation took effect on January 1, 1999.

6. Parent and Community Involvement in Education

As restructuring of school divisions occurs, the need for parent and community involvement in education at the local level becomes increasingly important. It is important to consider the issue of appropriate policies and structures for this involvement. Effective public participation in the discussion of parent and community involvement is key.

The Education Act, 1995 currently provides for two types of structures for parent and community involvement in education at the local level:

- district boards of trustees; and,
- local school advisory committees.

District Boards of Trustees

Except in cities and in school divisions that operate a school in only one municipality, the attendance area of each school constitutes a school district. Each district is required to have a district board of trustees. Sections 120 – 134 of *The Education Act, 1995* outline the roles, responsibilities and operations of district boards of trustees.

Local School Advisory Committees

In urban school divisions, at the discretion of the board of education, schools may establish local school advisory committees. In practice, these groups may have a number of different names such as parent advisory council, school community council or school council. Sections 135-140 of *The Education Act, 1995* describe local school advisory committees.

Establishing a Local School Advisory Committee in a Rural Area

In rural areas, the electors of the school district may petition the board of education to establish a local school advisory committee. If a committee is established, the district board of trustees ceases to exist (see section 135 of *The Education Act, 1995*).

Participation of the Aboriginal Community

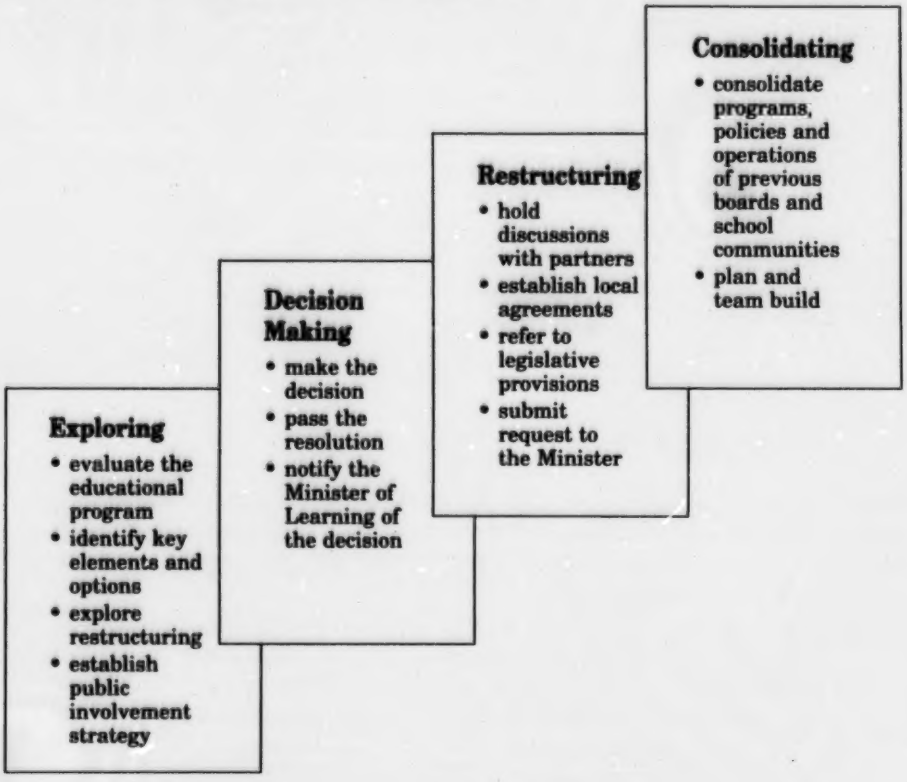
Many school divisions have established, or are in the process of establishing, special partnership agreements with First Nations or tribal councils. Agreements may include:

- co-management/co-governance agreements;
- establishment of the First Nation as a sub-division of the school division; or,
- tuition agreements.

In situations where agreements are in place, or under consideration, it will be critical that school divisions consult with Aboriginal organizations about any amalgamation/restructuring plans.

B. THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF RESTRUCTURING

The restructuring process can be described as a series of building blocks that move from the initial steps of exploration through to the consolidation of services following restructuring. The following diagram provides an overview of the process and briefly summarizes some of the major tasks.


Exploring
• evaluate the educational program
• identify key elements and options
• explore restructuring
• establish public involvement strategy
Decision Making
• make the decision
• pass the resolution
• notify the Minister of Learning of the decision
Restructuring
• hold discussions with partners
• establish local agreements
• refer to legislative provisions
• submit request to the Minister
Consolidating
• consolidate programs, policies and operations of previous boards and school communities
• plan and team build

Sustaining Momentum

Sustaining the momentum throughout the restructuring process will be critical for boards. The process can become stalled or lose momentum for a variety of reasons. It will be helpful for you to outline a time frame for restructuring, track your progress and frequently review the time frame. If certain steps are accomplished more quickly, or take longer than anticipated, the time frame can be adjusted.

1. Exploring the Key Elements and Options

The purpose of restructuring is to provide the highest quality of education to children and youth. The first step involves examining the quality of education provided, including those factors affecting services such as administration and governance. If restructuring can improve educational services, then it must be considered.

Many school divisions are already well on their way to examining restructuring as a means of maintaining or improving the quality of education offered and have concluded many of the first steps mentioned here. For others, these beginning steps will be a critical part of examining the possibilities for restructuring. Saskatchewan Learning's Regional Directors are available to provide assistance throughout the process.

The amount of time dedicated to these initial steps will be determined locally. When establishing a time frame for exploring the key elements and options, allow sufficient time to ensure adequate and meaningful involvement of teachers, administrators, other employees, parents, other partners and the public.

In examining the quality of education provided and whether restructuring can aid in improving services, first **explore the key elements** and then **identify options**.

Explore the Key Elements

This step involves the comprehensive examination of key elements to ensure all aspects have been explored. The primary focus should be on how to provide the best quality of educational services. Key elements for consideration include:

- education program and student services;
- demographics and enrolment;
- finances;
- school division boundaries;
- governance and administrative structure;
- the role of teachers and other employees in identifying, defining and prioritizing and decision making;
- parent and community involvement in education at the school level; and,
- First Nation and other Aboriginal partnerships.

Identify Options

Based on the key elements, this step involves identifying and exploring a range of options to address each element. The options available to address the elements will depend on local circumstances, needs and resources. A few topics are listed below to stimulate discussion.

- What options might maintain or enhance **the educational program and services to children and young people in the school divisions**? What changes, enhancements or additions could be made in:
  - Core Curriculum implementation and maintenance;
  - staffing;
  - staff development;
  - partnerships and integrated services;
  - equity in access to and benefit from educational services for all children and youth;
  - distance education;
  - services for children and youth with diverse needs;
  - policies and practices to deter children and youth from dropping out of school and to facilitate their transition back to school;
  - services for Aboriginal children and youth;
  - services supporting youth as they move from high school to post-secondary education and the world of work;
  - technology; and,
  - transportation services?

- Are there **governance changes** that should be made, such as:
  - restructured boundaries;
  - number of elected officials;
  - local school governance – district boards of trustees, local school advisory committees; or,
  - sub-division boundaries, including First Nations?

- What policies and structures will provide for the most effective **involvement of parents, young people and community** at the local level?

- What **administrative changes** can your board make to improve the quality of educational services, in terms of:
  - roles of central office staff;
  - roles of teachers and in-school administrators; and,
  - partnerships – sharing services with other divisions or other public entities?

- What health, justice, social and other services can be **integrated** to provide supports for children and youth experiencing difficulty?

- Can **partnerships** be developed with other public entities, community groups and local businesses to:
  - improve the quality of education;
  - improve services; and,
  - achieve efficiencies?

- What **financial options** would maintain or enhance the quality of education? Can restructuring aid in addressing financial issues?

- Can changes be made to ensure that the maximum amount of money is allocated toward **supports and services for children and young people**?

Involve the public and partners in identifying all the possible options and in the exploration and evaluation of options around each of the key elements.

Using a facilitator:

School divisions may also wish to consider using an outside facilitator to guide the process, initiate discussion and make recommendations. Advantages of independent facilitators are that they:

- **are objective;**
- **can act as a mediator for sensitive issues;**
- **have experience with public involvement processes; and,**
- **can focus on the issue of restructuring.**

Summary Chart: Exploring Key Elements and Options

STEP	ACTION
Explore the Key Elements	• Consult with the public and partners to identify key elements. • Research elements. • Prioritize.
Identify Options	• Consult with the public and all of the partners. • Identify a range of options for each element. • Research the feasibility of each option, weighing the positive and negative factors.

2. Decision Making

Making the Decision to Restructure

After engaging teachers, support staff, parents, students and the public in an exploration of the key elements and options available to ensure the provision of a high quality of education, the board will analyze the information collected and make a decision about whether or not to pursue restructuring. This decision will be based on the best interests of children and youth.

The board's decision will take the form of a resolution describing its intentions. Saskatchewan Learning Regional Directors are available to assist in exploring and analyzing the options. The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association can provide legal advice and other assistance to boards of education pursuing restructuring.

Summary Chart: Decision Making

STEP	ACTION

Make the Decision	• Determine the options that will best address the identified issues.
	• If the decision is made to restructure, the board should consider the following steps:
	  • pass a resolution to pursue restructuring (communicate the resolution to the Minister of Learning);
	  • contact the Saskatchewan Learning Regional Director in the area; and,
	  • pursue further discussions with neighbouring school divisions, other public entities and partners.

The next sections of the guide describe some of the details involved in the restructuring process.

3. Restructuring

Once the decision has been made to pursue restructuring, create a plan that allows sufficient time to accommodate the meaningful involvement of teachers, support staff, parents, students and other young people, partners and the public. As well, it should allow for a thorough exploration of the issues and administration of the details involved.

This section outlines decisions and actions that boards of education will make in order to restructure. This information has been gathered by examining the reports of those who have restructured and seeking the advice of key individuals throughout the province.

Some actions and decisions need to be made by the participating boards of education prior to restructuring. Others are best left to the new board. While this section makes suggestions, local circumstances will direct decision making.

Decisions to Make Prior to Restructuring

Once the decision has been made to pursue restructuring, there are a number of further decisions that must be made before restructuring takes place. Each of these is described in detail in this section. They are categorized under the following headings:

1. **The Transition Framework**
2. **Employees**
3. **Request to the Minister of Learning**
4. **Administration**

1. The Transition Framework:

a) The Leadership Team

Participating school divisions may wish to consider the establishment of a leadership team. This team can be a combination of division board trustees, district trustees/local school advisory committee members, administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, students, other young people and community members, or an independent group. When establishing the leadership team, ensure that team members are appointed by the organizations they will be representing.

Possible responsibilities of the leadership team are to:

- examine all aspects of restructuring;
- ensure all communities are involved in public discussions;
- keep teachers and other employees informed and involved in discussions;
- keep all of the involved school divisions and communities informed of the process;
- deal with significant and contentious issues;
- maintain contact with government and other agencies;
- put forward recommendations to the respective school divisions and communities; and,
- oversee plans for restructuring and integration of all involved areas.

This leadership team will be involved in the direction and general monitoring of the process. There will also be many administrative tasks requiring significant staff assistance. At the outset of the process, the participating boards of education should consider the time commitment of staff and assign responsibility for the administrative aspects.

b) Agreements Regarding Significant Restructuring Arrangements

The participating boards of education may decide, where necessary, to sign agreements regarding significant restructuring arrangements. Each circumstance will be unique. Agreements may cover detailed arrangements for topics such as:

- assets and liabilities (e.g., reserves, local levies);
- agreements and contracts made with employees;
- agreements with third parties (e.g., bus contractors); and,
- policies.

Example of an Agreement

Excerpts from the Blaine Lake and Saskatchewan Valley School Divisions' Principles of Amalgamation:

- That the central purpose of this amalgamation is to provide the best educational services to all students.
- That the areas being amalgamated with the existing Saskatchewan Valley School Division include the Blaine Lake School District and the Leask School District from the existing Blaine Lake School Division.
- That the number of Board members and the sub-divisions remain unchanged in Saskatchewan Valley School Division and the two sub-divisions being added be represented by one Board member each.
- That the first day of operation of the amalgamated school division shall be January 1, 1997.
- That the by-elections for the Board members from the newly added sub-divisions and districts of Blaine Lake and Leask shall be held in accordance with the Minister's Order.
- That upon the signing of this document, the Board of Education of Blaine Lake School Division No. 57 and Director of Education will collaborate with the Board of Education of Saskatchewan Valley School Division No. 49 and Director of Education in making decisions that will affect the future operations of the amalgamated school division.
- That there be ongoing involvement and two-way communication in resolving outstanding issues with the groups involved in the process.
- That every effort be made to ensure all employees of the new system be made to feel that they are all part of the new Saskatchewan Valley team.

Note: The Blaine Lake School Division and the Battlefords School Division agreed upon similar principles for the transfer of the Hafford School District.

c) Dispute Resolution Procedure

Participating school divisions should have guidelines for consensus building (please see Appendix E) and a dispute resolution procedure in place at the outset. Local determination is an important aspect of the restructuring process. Whenever possible, disputes should be resolved locally.

A dispute resolution procedure must be structured to ensure that all parties have a fair opportunity to present their point of view. The procedure should also be simple. It could include:

- discussions among the parties involved to resolve the dispute locally;
- a facilitator, committee or panel;
- a mediator to develop a solution that will be satisfactory to both sides; and,
- a jointly agreed-upon panel or a third party to make a recommendation or binding decision.

"Other jurisdictions who have experienced restructuring emphasize the importance of putting communication with affected employees high on the list of priorities, and indeed many suggest there is no higher priority than meeting staff needs and communicating effectively with employees."

(British Columbia School Superintendents' Association & British Columbia School District Secretary-Treasurers' Association, 1996)

2. Employees:

Establishing effective involvement and communication procedures with teachers and other employees early in the discussion process will help ease staff anxiety about changes that may result due to restructuring. This formal procedure should involve all affected groups and individuals, whether unionized or non-unionized.

a) Teachers

Sections 203 and 204 of *The Education Act, 1995* describe how the local collective agreements are to be handled in restructuring. As well, page 41 in this guide provides further information on handling teacher agreements during restructuring. However, participating boards of education should discuss various options with local teacher associations prior to restructuring.

b) Unionized Staff

While the newly elected board of education will be responsible for collective agreements with unionized employees, the participating boards of education should consult with affected employees and recommend a procedure for the new board to follow. This approach enables staff to have involvement in developing procedures prior to restructuring, thereby easing potential anxiety over future contract negotiations. As well, this approach will give the new board a procedure agreed upon by all parties, saving time and allowing board members to focus on the details of the contracts rather than on the procedure.

c) Non-Unionized Staff

A procedure may be recommended for the newly restructured board to follow regarding contract discussions with non-teaching support staff and administrative employees who are not unionized. In some school divisions, staff may have formed informal associations to negotiate contracts. In all circumstances employees should be treated fairly.

"... in order for it to work, those who are in a position to contribute the leadership required at the local level (Directors, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers, etc.) need to be assured that they will have a place either in the newly formed division, or in another acceptable position. Only then will such individuals be free to contribute their much needed expertise in support of trustees ... while at the same time there will need to be fewer trustees as a result."

(Bill Cooke, Director of Education, Saskatchewan Rivers School Division, The Leader, Fall 2000)

Central Office Staff

As mentioned previously, contract details should be left to the restructured board of education. However, some situations, such as the retirement or resignation of a director of education or secretary-treasurer, may warrant further discussion by the participating boards. Suggestions for central office staff are given below.

Prior to restructuring, consider a variety of options for the selection of central office staff. Local circumstances will determine the best option. Some possibilities include:

- appointing interim staff;
- advertising for interim staff;
- leaving decision entirely to new board; or,
- hiring permanent staff.

Depending on what decisions are made regarding central office staff some of the following may need to be considered:

- job descriptions;
- selection procedures including advertising policy;
- selection criteria;
- contract details – position functions, authority, salary and benefits, term of contract, professional development provisions, evaluation process;
- severance packages and procedures; and,
- reassignment procedures.

d) Equity Plans

Some school divisions may have equity plans registered with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission while others do not. Boards of education are urged to consider the implications of their restructuring initiative on equity issues.

3. Request to the Minister of Learning:

In order to change certain aspects of a school division structure, permission must be obtained from the Minister of Learning. A board of education is required to submit a written request to the Minister. The request can be made jointly with the other participating boards of education. Appendix F provides a sample request to the Minister of Learning.

The request for a restructured school division must include:

- geographic area;
- name (if a new division or a change of name);
- date of establishment (if creating a new division);
- date on which board of a new division will assume office;
- date on which existing boards of education will be disestablished (where applicable);
- size of the board (if a new division or a change in number);
- sub-division descriptions;
- election information (if an election is to be held); and,
- arrangements for the transfer of assets and liabilities.

These matters will be legally prescribed in the Minister's Order. In addition, policies and structures to involve parents, young people and community members in education will need to be clarified.

a) Elections

Number of Trustees on the Board of Education

The Education Act, 1995 allows for a minimum of 5 trustees and a maximum of 10. (Note: The maximum of 10 trustees excludes any trustee elected to represent an Indian reserve that has been established as a sub-division.)

If a school division is newly created or altered, and plans to change the number of trustees, the request to the Minister of Learning must include the planned number of trustees on the board of education and a description of the sub-divisions.

The Minister's Order creating the restructured school division will prescribe the number of trustees and the sub-divisions.

Sub-Division Boundaries

In school divisions where there are sub-divisions, revising sub-division boundaries may be a sensitive matter. The process will need to be thought through carefully. There are no legislative requirements or regulations governing sub-dividing a school division for election purposes. Technical assistance can be sought from Saskatchewan Learning.

Timing:

The processing of the request to the Minister of Learning and the signing of the Order-in-Council authorizing the establishment of the restructured school division and the Minister's Order to create the restructured division will require at least 8 weeks once the request reaches the department. Ensure that you allow sufficient time for this step.

- **In order to complete the process in time for the 2003 Local Elections, the request will need to be submitted to Saskatchewan Learning by April 30, 2003 at the latest.**

For further information on establishing a time frame for the restructuring process contact your Regional Director.

District Boards of Trustees

The Education Act, 1995 stipulates that the district board shall have a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 9 trustees. Within that range it is up to the board of education to determine the number of trustees on the district boards.

Throughout the government's public consultation on the structure of public education in 1996, strong local involvement was a major concern expressed by participants. Boards of education should take some time to reflect upon the responsibilities and roles assigned to district boards of trustees.

Election Procedures

Election procedures for both boards of education and district boards of trustees are outlined in *The Education Act, 1995* and in *The Local Government Election Act*.

Local School Advisory Committees

For more detailed information on establishing local school advisory committees, refer to section A.6 *(Parent and Community Involvement in Education)* in this document.

Where a school division is created consisting of a former urban and former rural school division, the urban portion retains its local school advisory committees. In the rural portion of the new school division, each district can decide to retain a district board of trustees or to petition the board of education to form a local school advisory committee.

b) Transfer of Assets and Liabilities

Transfer of Title

If a school division is being disestablished, or if a portion of an existing school division is being transferred, the board should prepare a list of all properties to be transferred. A Minister's Order will vest title to all property being transferred in the name of the board of education of the new school division or the receiving school division. Upon presentation of the Minister's Order and payment of fees, the Land Titles Office is required to register title in the name of the receiving school division (section 118 of *The Education Act, 1995*).

Disposal of Assets

When restructuring occurs, some services may be combined among the former school divisions, such as central administration. This may result in surplus buildings, equipment, furniture and other assets.

The Education Act, 1995 does not require that boards of education seek approval for the sale of administrative property. It does, however, require that boards put the property up for public auction or tender. In addition, boards may have their own policy requirements for the sale of assets.

c) School Division Name

In choosing a name for the restructured school division, consideration should be given to the geographic area and population. The name should be inclusive and in some situations, it may be best if the name is neutral. As with other decisions surrounding restructuring, selection of the name of the school division should involve teachers and other employees, partners and the public. Some restructuring school divisions have held contests.

The decision on a name will have to be made prior to submitting the request to the Minister for boundary changes.

4. Administration:

a) Office Location

Efficiencies may be realized through combining office services. Where two or more central offices are in existence, only one may be needed following restructuring.

The location of the school division's central office is one of the choices that can be made prior to restructuring. If so, specific criteria for determining the office location should be developed before hand. Considerations in developing the criteria include:

- a central location in the new division;
- existing office space that can accommodate staff;
- travel distance for central office staff;
- services in the community;
- required renovations;
- ownership or lease agreement;
- sufficient space to meet long term needs; and,
- opportunities for sharing with other public entities such as municipalities.

If an office or other building will be closed in one or more communities, communication with those communities will be important. Urban and rural municipal councils, as well as any other groups directly affected by the decision, should be aware of the criteria used to select the location of the division's central office. These municipalities and organizations will need to be notified promptly of the final decision. Trustees need to be aware of the effect closing an office facility may have on a town or village. However, the final decision is to be made based on the best interests of the school division, students, staff and parents.

b) Arrangements for Essential Administrative Services

The board of the newly restructured school division will be responsible for evaluating educational and support services to determine what efficiencies can be found. However, it is recommended that the participating boards look at some administrative services to ensure a smooth transfer. For example, it will be essential that employees and accounts be paid on time.

Participating boards of education may wish to examine the following services to determine which preparations and arrangements are needed prior to restructuring, and which can be left to the new board and administration:

- banking;
- purchasing;
- integrating accounting methods;
- payroll; and,
- other agreements and contracts (e.g., insurance, auditing).

Summary Chart: Restructuring

STEP	ACTION
Establish the Transition Framework	• Establish the leadership team. • Determine the public involvement process. • Determine what, if any, agreements are required. • Establish a dispute resolution procedure.
Establish Employee Involvement Procedures	• Initiate meetings with all local teachers and employee organizations and other employees to establish involvement and communication procedures.

Prepare the Request to the Minister of Learning	• Finalize all necessary arrangements for the request to the Minister of Learning including:
	  • geographic area;
	  • name;
	  • date of establishment;
	  • date on which board of a new division will assume office;
	  • date on which existing boards will be disestablished;
	  • size of the board sub-division descriptions;
	  • election information; and,
	  • arrangements for the transfer of assets and liabilities.

Make Necessary Administrative Decisions	• Finalize administrative decisions, which could include:
	  • office location;
	  • banking;
	  • payroll; and
	  • accounts payable.

Key Date Reminder

Request must be submitted to the Minister of Learning no later than April 30, 2003 in order to amalgamate/restructure in time for the Fall 2003 Local Elections.

4. Consolidating Services

There are decisions that should be left to the newly elected board after restructuring has taken place. These can be categorized as:

1. **Team Building;**
2. **Policy Development;**
3. **Employee Contracts and Agreements;**
4. **Clarification of Roles;**
5. **Consolidation of Educational and Administrative Services; and,**
6. **Parent and Community Involvement in Education.**

1. Team Building

It will be important for the new division to come together as an organization. The feeling of belonging, of being a part of the new division, may not happen quickly but there are constructive ways to ease the transition.

Group Dynamics

When a new group is formed, those who study group processes often refer to four stages of development. Understanding group dynamics may help you overcome some of the frustration that may result in the first year. The four stages are:

Forming:	Group members get to know one another and the issues in a polite and guarded way.
Storming:	Group members begin airing their differences and sorting out their difficulties.
Norming:	The group gets organized. It develops procedures, acquires skills, and feels comfortable confronting issues. Members give feedback in an open and constructive manner.
Performing:	The group begins to work together effectively to accomplish its objectives.

Communication skills are important at all stages, and imperative during "storming".

Source: Hergert, Phlegard & Périz-Sellés (1991)

Planning

Soon after the new division is created, consider setting aside time to plan. This may involve developing a mission, vision, goals and objectives for the division, as well as planning the educational programs and services the division will offer.

Going through the process of planning will help ensure trustees, teachers, other employees, parents, students and community members are aimed in the same direction.

Trustee and Staff Training

Training for trustees and staff is always an important aspect of the success of an organization. In times of change, training is vital. A larger division may mean a change in roles for trustees and staff, and changes in educational programs and services.

Provincial organizations, such as the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials; the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; the Saskatchewan Association of School Councils; and the unions representing support staff, offer workshops, assistance and support to their membership.

2. Policy Development

A major task of the new board will be the integration and adoption of policies for the school division. Some of the tasks, such as compilation and analysis of the various policies, can be performed prior to restructuring. However, the adoption of the policies is the responsibility of the restructured board.

The new board may wish to adopt temporarily the policies of one of the previous boards while studying all the policies, or pass a motion that would have all existing policies stand until such time as a new set has been adopted.

The first step in policy development will be comparing the policies of the various divisions. The British Columbia School Superintendents' Association and the British Columbia School District Secretary-Treasurers' Association (1996) suggest consideration be given to:

- policies that are significantly different and require thorough discussion;
- policies that are the same or similar and can easily be merged;
- topics where no policies exist, but may be required;
- policies that could be deleted; and,
- cost implications of policies.

Policy development will take a considerable amount of time. You may wish to plan for special policy sessions in addition to regular board meetings.

3. Employee Contracts and Agreements

The most appropriate way to structure collective bargaining in a new school division will need to be determined by all of the parties affected. Procedures for establishing how and when negotiations are to proceed may have been developed prior to restructuring. If procedures have been developed, trustees and employee representatives can concentrate on the provisions in the agreements. If a procedure has not yet been developed, you may wish to organize meetings with employee representatives to discuss the establishment of procedures.

Issues for all parties to consider include:

- common provisions, clauses and language in agreements;
- provisions which are inconsistent from one agreement to another;
- provisions which are in one agreement, but not in others; and,
- cost implications.

"When representatives for the LINC teams and executives of the local associations involved meet to develop the new package they may find it beneficial to begin with a comparative analysis of the terms of their contracts. This will enable them to identify similarities, differences and new points to consider."

(Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, 1997)

4. Clarification of Roles

During the first year, in addition to normal responsibilities, the consolidation of the educational programs and the administrative services may take considerable time for the board and central office staff. Trustees and staff may wish to clarify their roles in order to make the most effective use of time.

Board of Education

The primary role of the board of education will be:

- policy development;
- planning; and,
- monitoring.

Director of Education and Secretary-Treasurer

In the initial year, the director and secretary-treasurer will have the responsibility for the administrative aspects of consolidation. The director will work closely with the instructional team to integrate the educational programs and services.

5. Consolidation of Educational and Administrative Services

In the first year, a major focus for trustees and employees will be the consolidation of services such as:

Educational programs and services:

- the learning program;
- special education supports;
- services for children with diverse needs;
- resource centres;
- professional development; and,
- school policies.

"Parents and community need a means by which they can gather information, have input into policy making and take responsibility for outcomes. Parents and community/public need a forum when they can gain, for example, an understanding of changes in curriculum and instruction, such understanding leading to active support."

(Saskatchewan Association of School Councils, 1996)

"The major concern of parents and the community is the quality of education that children and young people will receive. When included as key partners and given the opportunity to experience the restructuring process first hand, parents, students and others can assess the opportunities and make informed decisions to support the process, based on reliable information."

(Ruth Griffith, President, Saskatchewan Association of School Councils, 2002)

Administrative services:

- accounting systems and procedures;
- payroll systems and agreements;
- auditing agreements;
- purchasing agreements and contracts; and,
- insurance policies.

6. Parent and Community Involvement in Education

Communities want to be involved in decisions made about the school operations and education programs their children receive. As school divisions become larger, boards of education are encouraged to examine the role of local representation and implement strategies to ensure local involvement in decision making is meaningful.

Some questions you may wish to consider are:

- What policies and structures are needed to enhance parent and community involvement?
- What level of authority do local governance structures have?
- Are the district boards of trustees/local school advisory committees involved in meaningful decision making?
- Are there other specific decisions and tasks that could be delegated to the district boards of trustees/local school advisory committee?
- Is the composition of the district boards of trustees/local school advisory committee representative of the school community? If not, are there ways the board of education and schools could encourage greater representation from specific populations?
- Will the role of the school principal change?

Summary Chart: After Restructuring – Consolidating Services

Depending on individual circumstances and preferences, the actions described in this chart may be undertaken in a different order or they may occur simultaneously.

STEP	ACTION
Team Building	• Orient trustees and staff. • Train trustees and staff. • Plan.
Policy Development	• Develop interim policy procedures. • Review and analyze existing policies. • Adopt policies for restructured board.
Employee Contracts and Agreements	• Review and discuss procedures with employees. • Analyze contracts. • Negotiate as appropriate.
Clarification of Roles	• Discuss roles of trustees and employees. • Adopt policies, procedures and job descriptions.
Consolidation of Services	• Consolidate educational programs and services. • Consolidate administrative services.
Parent and Community Involvement	• Examine role of district boards of trustees/local school advisory committees.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: **Comparison with Other Provinces**

Appendix B: **School^{PLUS}: *Securing Saskatchewan's Future, Ensuring the Wellbeing and Educational Success of Saskatchewan's Children and Youth: Provincial Response to the Role of the School Task Force Final Report***

Appendix C: **Principles of Core Curriculum**

Appendix D: **Legislative Provisions**

Appendix E: **Communication**

Appendix F: **Sample Request to the Minister of Learning**

Appendix G: **References**

The objective of restructuring is to maintain or enhance the quality of education. All decisions should be made with the best interests of children and youth in mind.

Appendix A: Comparison with Other Provinces

PROVINCE	SCHOOL BOARDS	RESTRUCTURING INFORMATION
British Columbia	Total: 60 boards (59 boards, 1 Francophone Authority)	• In 1996, the number of school districts was reduced from 75 to 59. • The Francophone Authority was established in 1997.
Alberta	Total: 62 boards (41 public, 16 separate, 5 Francophone)	• In 1995, the number of boards was reduced from 146 to 66. Further reductions occurred in 1997/98.
Manitoba	Total: 37 boards (effective July 2002)	• In 2001, the Manitoba government announced an initiative to reduce the number of school divisions. By July 2002 the number will reduce from 54 to 37.
Ontario	Total: 72 major boards (plus 33 isolate and hospital boards)	• In 1997, Ontario reduced the number of major boards from 129 to 72 district boards: 60 English language boards (29 public, 31 separate) and 12 French language boards (4 public, 8 separate).
Quebec	Total: 72 boards	• In June 1997, the Quebec National Assembly passed legislation guaranteeing the establishment of francophone school boards and anglophone school boards. The number of school boards was reduced from the existing 156 to 72.
New Brunswick	Total: 14 District Education Councils (effective July 2002)	• In 2001, major governance reforms created 14 District Education Councils (9 English and 5 French).
Nova Scotia	Total: 7 (6 regional, 1 provincial board for Acadian and Francophone education)	• In 1996, the number of school boards was reduced from 22 to 7.
Prince Edward Island	Total: 3 (2 English, 1 French)	• In 1994, the number of school boards was reduced from 5 to 3.
Newfoundland	Total: 11	• In 1997, 27 denominational boards were replaced by 10 interdenominational boards and 1 Francophone board.

Appendix B: SchoolPLUS: *Securing Saskatchewan's Future, Ensuring the Wellbeing and Educational Success of Saskatchewan's Children and Youth:*

Provincial Response to the Role of the School Task Force Final Report

"The SchoolPLUS vision, proposed by the Task Force and adopted by the Government, presents a timely and compelling opportunity. It provides a viable model to focus and heighten our shared efforts toward ensuring that every child and young person has the supports needed for wellbeing and success in school and in life."

(Government of Saskatchewan, 2002)

The Task Force on the Role of the School Final Report – *SchoolPLUS: A Vision for Children and Youth*

In May 1999, the Minister of Education established a Task Force and Public Dialogue on the Role of the School. The purpose was to seek shared understanding among educators and stakeholders and the general public regarding the challenges and responsibilities of schools, and to determine the gap between public expectations of schools and their capacity. The Task Force engaged in two phases of public dialogue in the preparation of its Final Report, travelling to more than 30 communities, receiving in excess of 110 submissions and participating in over 250 meetings or dialogues. The Public Dialogue involved a range of stakeholders, including human services organizations, boards of education, health boards, police, business and community members.

The Final Report of Role of the School Task Force, *SchoolPLUS – A Vision for Children and Youth: Final Report to the Minister of Education, Government of Saskatchewan* was released in March 2001. It identified a number of social and economic forces impacting on the wellbeing of children and youth and presented 97 recommendations. In its vision for SchoolPLUS, three key areas were identified:

- schools must concern themselves with the development and wellbeing of the whole child – intellectual, social, physical and emotional – if they are to be effective;
- schools need to build effective relationships with their communities, including working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples; and,
- there must be a renewed emphasis on service integration and interagency cooperation.

Government's Response

In February 2002, the Government released its response to the Task Force Final Report. The Government endorsed the Task Force's vision for SchoolPLUS, stating that schools have two primary functions:

- To educate children and youth – developing the whole child, intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically; and,
- To support service delivery – schools serve as centres at the community level for the delivery of appropriate social, health, recreation, culture, justice and other services for children and their families.

In addition, the Response committed to:

- establishing appropriate structures to implement SchoolPLUS. This includes the creation of the *Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth*;
- undertaking a comprehensive school improvement process – *Strengthening Educational Capacity Process*;
- continuing to allocate financial resources toward implementing the SchoolPLUS vision; and,
- advancing human services integration with the school as a major locale for community services.

Appendix C: Principles of Core Curriculum

Core Curriculum is intended to provide all Saskatchewan students with an education that will serve them well regardless of their choices after leaving school. It reinforces the teaching of basic skills and introduces an expanded range of new skills to the curriculum.

Core Curriculum is developmental in nature and based on a K to 12 continuum. In recognition of the stages of child growth and development, the grades are grouped into the following levels:

- Kindergarten;
- Elementary Level (grades 1 to 5);
- Middle Level (grades 6 to 9); and,
- Secondary Level (grades 10 to 12).

The two major components of Core Curriculum are the **Required Areas of Study** and the **Common Essential Learnings**. Seven Required Areas of Study form the framework of the curriculum. Six categories of Common Essential Learnings are to be incorporated in an appropriate manner into all courses of study offered in Saskatchewan schools.

Although Core Curriculum specifies Required Areas of Study for all students, opportunities for choice or electives increase as students move through the K to 12 continuum.

To meet community and student needs at the local level, provision is made within Core Curriculum to offer **Locally-Determined Options**. In recognition of the diverse needs of students, provision is made through the **Adaptive Dimension** for teachers to adapt instruction.

In addition to these components, Core Curriculum includes various initiatives that guide the development of teaching materials as well as instruction in the classroom. These initiatives include: resource-based learning, Indian and Métis content and perspectives, gender equity, multicultural education, special education, instructional approaches, evaluation practices and others.

Required Areas of Study

The 7 Required Areas of Study within the Core Curriculum are:

- language arts;
- mathematics;
- science;
- social studies;
- health education;
- arts education; and,
- physical education.

Each required area has unique knowledge, skills and values that are essential for all students at the Elementary, Middle and Secondary Levels. Therefore, the Required Areas of Study are included throughout the school program from the Elementary to Secondary Levels.

Common Essential Learnings

The six Common Essential Learnings within the Core Curriculum are:

- Communication;
- Numeracy;
- Critical and Creative Thinking;
- Technological Literacy;
- Personal and Social Values and Skills; and,
- Independent Learning.

The Common Essential Learnings are 6 interrelated areas containing knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities that are considered important for learning in all school subjects. New Core Curriculum guides include instructional objectives, materials, methods and guidelines for incorporating the Common Essential Learnings into each area of study.

Locally-determined Options

The Core Curriculum makes provision in the K to 12 school program for Locally-determined Options to gain time for local or community program priorities. Approved policy guidelines are as follows:

- at the Elementary and Middle Levels, school divisions may gain time for Locally-determined Options by reducing the time to be spent in one or more of the required areas up to a maximum of 20%;
- at the Secondary Level, time for Locally-determined Options is available through the use of courses in the elective categories; and,
- Locally-determined Options can be provided through the selection of provincially-developed courses or through courses developed at the local level. Saskatchewan Learning will continue to require that all locally developed courses be reviewed for approval by the department.

Decisions about the priorities of locally-determined program offerings, such as religious education or second language instruction, are best made by boards of education in consideration of local community needs.

The Adaptive Dimension

In order to meet the variety of students' needs, flexibility is needed within the school program to enable schools and teachers to adapt instructional materials, methods and environment to provide the most appropriate educational opportunities for students.

The Adaptive Dimension is used to:

- help students achieve the objectives of the course;
- maximize student learning and independence;
- lessen discrepancies between achievement and ability;
- promote a positive self-image and feeling of belonging; and,
- promote a willingness to become involved in learning.

These purposes address a primary function of the school, that of helping children and young people to maximize their potential as independent learners.

Resource-based Learning

Resource-based Learning involves use of a wide array of print, non-print and human resources to assist students in learning. It offers students opportunities to choose, to explore and to discover from a variety of resources both within and outside of their community. Resource-based Learning is a means by which teachers can greatly assist the development of attitudes and abilities for independent, life-long learning.

Indian and Métis Content and Perspectives

The inclusion of Indian and Métis content and perspectives benefits all students. Culturally relevant curriculum also supports positive group identity. Indian and Métis instructional resources foster meaningful learning experiences for Indian and Métis students, and promote the development of positive attitudes in all students toward Indian and Métis peoples. Awareness of one's own culture and the cultures of others develops self-concept, enhances learning and promotes an appreciation of Canada's diverse society.

Gender Equity

In order to reach the goal of Gender Equity in the K to 12 system, Saskatchewan Learning is committed to efforts to bring about the elimination of gender bias, which restricts the participation and choices of all our students. Expectations based primarily on gender limit students' ability to develop to their fullest potential. It is important that school programs reflect the variety of roles and the wide range of experiences, behaviours and attitudes available to all members of society. Students need encouragement to explore a wide variety of options based on aptitudes, abilities and interests, rather than gender.

Instruction and Evaluation

The components and initiatives of Core Curriculum find expression, interpretation and implementation through instructional practice. For this reason, a range of instructional approaches and evaluation techniques are required if teachers are to meet the objectives of Core Curriculum and the instructional needs of students.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is an interdisciplinary educational process that fosters understanding, acceptance, empathy, and constructive and harmonious relations among people of diverse cultures. It encourages learners of all ages to view different cultures as a source of learning and enrichment. Multicultural education first develops an awareness or recognition of one's own culture and ethnicity and moves to developing an understanding of similarities and differences among cultures. It fosters positive attitudes towards self and members of other ethnocultural groups.

Special Education

Saskatchewan Learning ensures appropriate education to children and youth with exceptional needs through legislative and policy support as well as consultative support services. The right of all children and youth in the province to an appropriate education is provided in *The Education Act, 1995*. All children and youth have the right to receive instruction appropriate to their age and level of educational achievement in courses of instruction approved by Saskatchewan Learning and the board of education.

Appendix D: Legislative Provisions

This section highlights the legislative provisions related to restructuring.

Circumstances can vary considerably. Therefore, flexibility is needed to accommodate local agreements and requirements. This guide cannot answer all your questions, but it can provide information on those most frequently asked. Boards of education are encouraged to consult with the Regional Directors of Education, and to seek legal counsel as they examine options and work through the restructuring process.

A summary chart is included to provide an overview of the legislative provisions. Following the chart, a more complete description of the process is provided. Section B.3 (*Restructuring*) of this guide also deals with these issues.

Boards should have the most recent copy of *The Education Act, 1995*. To obtain an up to date version, access the Queen's Printer Web site at www.qp.gov.sk.ca, using the new Freelaw service. The Web site also provides directions for the purchase of paper copies of the statutes and regulations.

Amalgamation/Restructuring at a Glance: Summary Chart

The following chart provides an overview of the legislative provisions with respect to amalgamation/restructuring. Refer to the section following for detailed descriptions.

1. BOUNDARY REVISION PROCEDURES **Page 40**	• School divisions disestablish and create a new division.	• One or more divisions disestablish and join(s) another division.	• A portion of a school division transfers to another school division.
2. ELECTIONS **a) Board of Education** **Page 41**	• Minister of Learning specifies the date of nominations and election day. • The election can be held at any time.	• If new sub-divisions are created, by-elections are held by the receiving division.	• If new sub-divisions are created, by-elections are held by the receiving division.
b) District Board of Trustees **Page 43**	• Newly established board forms local school districts. • Boards may wish to consider establishment of local school advisory committees.	• Local school districts are formed by existing board of education. • Boards may wish to consider establishment of local school advisory committees.	• Local school districts are formed by the receiving board of education. • Boards may wish to consider establishment of local school advisory committees.
3. EMPLOYEES **a) Teacher Local Agreements** **Page 44**	• Teacher local agreements remain in effect until new contract negotiated with the new Board.	• Teacher local agreements remain in effect until new contract negotiated with the new Board.	• Teacher local agreements remain in effect until new contract negotiated with the new Board.
b) Other Collective Agreements **Page 44**	• *The Trade Union Act* applies.	• *The Trade Union Act* applies.	• *The Trade Union Act* applies.
c) Contracts of Employment **Page 45**	• *The Education Act, 1995* does not specify procedures. • The new board must deal with employees according to the terms of individual contracts.	• *The Education Act, 1995* does not specify procedures. • The receiving board must deal with employees according to the terms of individual contracts.	• *The Education Act, 1995* does not specify procedures. • The receiving board must deal with employees according to the terms of individual contracts.
4. ASSETS AND LIABILITIES **Page 45**	• Assets and liabilities inherited by the new board.	• Assets and liabilities inherited by receiving board.	• Disposition of assets and liabilities to be dealt with locally.
5. LOCAL EDUCATION PROPERTY TAX **Page 45**	• If existing board has set mill rate, it remains in effect. If existing board has not set mill rate, the new board sets rate.	• If existing board has set mill rate, it remains in effect. If existing board has not set mill rate, the receiving board sets rate.	• If existing board has set mill rate, it remains in effect. If existing board has not set mill rate, the receiving board sets rate.

1. Boundary Revision Procedures

As identified previously, boundary revisions for school divisions can take a variety of forms. In practice, boards of education will pursue this change through one of the following procedures:

- Amalgamation (procedure #1 or #2); or
- Transfer.

a) Amalgamation

The Education Act, 1995 identifies specific requirements and procedures for the amalgamation of school divisions. The two different routes school divisions can follow are outlined below:

Procedure #1 – School divisions disestablish

(Corresponding legislation: sections 41, 42 and 60 of *The Education Act, 1995*)

If this route is taken, all of the participating school divisions disestablish and form a new school division.

The participating boards of education apply to the Minister of Learning to establish a new school division comprising the same total area.

The applicants must provide such information as the proposed name, the proposed size of the board, and (if necessary) the proposed sub-division boundaries.

When the new division is established, it initially has no board, no assets or liabilities, and no powers or duties. For a short period of time, the geographic area and its residents are simultaneously part of one of the existing divisions and of the new division.

Procedure #2 – One or more school divisions join one or more existing divisions

(Corresponding legislation: sections 54 and 60 of *The Education Act, 1995*)

In this option, one or more of the participating school divisions disestablish and join one or more existing school divisions.

The disestablishing school divisions request the Minister of Learning to transfer all their lands, assets and liabilities to the school division with which they propose to amalgamate.

The school divisions involved must provide such information as any change in name for the enlarged school division, any change in board size and, if necessary, new sub-division boundaries.

b) Transfer

In this option, a school division is not disestablished. Property (buildings, land), as well as employees and service contracts with respect to one or more school communities are transferred to another school division.

The board of education transferring one or more school communities requests the Minister of Learning to transfer the lands, assets and liabilities associated with those school communities to the receiving school division.

Communities must participate fully in the consultation process. In some situations, a community or number of communities may disagree with the board of education's proposal for restructuring. In these situations, it is expected that an arrangement be reached prior to submitting the request to the Minister. The arrangement must be satisfactory to all parties involved. Information has been provided in this Guide on public involvement processes (pp. 10-11), dispute resolution procedures (p. 21) and consensus building (p. 47).

2. Elections

a) Election of Boards of Education

(Corresponding legislation: section 42 of *The Education Act, 1995*; sections 11.1 and 23 and clauses 2(1)(p), 50(1)(a), and 55(b) of *The Local Government Election Act*)

The Education Act, 1995 allows for a minimum of 5 trustees and a maximum of 10. The maximum of 10 trustees does not include any First Nations representatives of Indian reserves.

Procedure #1

The procedures and requirements for the election of the trustees of the first board in the newly created school division are outlined below:

- The Minister of Learning, in the Minister's Order establishing the new school division, will specify the date for the first election, nomination day and related matters. This first election can be held at anytime. It is not limited to the date of the regular general elections.
- Only residents of a school division are able to vote or stand for election for the board of education. Therefore, the date of the first election must be after the date on which the new school division is established.

Where an urban and a rural school division amalgamate, *The Education Act, 1995* (section 40) provides four options:

1. Sub-divide both the urban and rural portions of the school division;
2. Sub-divide the rural portion of the school division and hold elections at-large in the urban areas;
3. Sub-divide only the urban portion of the school division and hold elections at-large in the rural portion; or,
4. Determine not to sub-divide the school division and hold elections at-large in the urban portion and also in the rural portion.

The Minister is required to specify the date on which the new board is to assume office. This must be the date on which the existing divisions are disestablished. There cannot be a period when no corporate body is responsible for the assets, liabilities and services involved.

The boards in the existing divisions do not have to resign. The boards automatically cease to exist when the divisions are disestablished. As described previously, there will be a short period of time when the newly created board and the disestablishing boards are all in existence.

The Education Act, 1995 now includes a special provision to accommodate amalgamations that occur at the time of scheduled school board elections. Where a school division is to be disestablished, but the date of the disestablishment falls after the date of the scheduled elections, the trustees on the existing board are allowed to remain in office until the date of disestablishment, without having to be re-elected for this short period.

The first election of the board is to be conducted in accordance with the rules and procedures for a general election set out in *The Local Government Election Act*.

Procedure #2

Since no new school division is being established in this option, the procedures for a first election do not apply.

- If the receiving division is divided into sub-divisions and the disestablished division becomes one or more new sub-divisions, by-elections are held to fill the vacancies on the board. If the disestablished division is simply incorporated within one or more existing sub-divisions, no elections are required.
- If the receiving division is not divided into sub-divisions, and if the restructured division is still small enough that it will not be sub-divided and the size of the board increased, no elections are required. Otherwise, a by-election would be required either to increase the size of an at-large board, or to fill a vacancy in the area being added.

Transfer

The procedures for elections within this option are similar to those used with procedure #2.

- If the receiving division is divided into sub-divisions and the transferred portion becomes one or more new sub-divisions, by-elections are held to fill the vacancies on the board. If the transferred portion is simply incorporated within one or more existing sub-divisions, no elections are required.
- If the receiving division is not divided into sub-divisions, and if the restructured division is still small enough that it will not be sub-divided and the size of the board increased, no elections are required. Otherwise, a by-election would be required either to increase the size of an at-large board, or to fill a vacancy in the area being added.

b) Elections of District Boards of Trustees:

(Corresponding legislation: sections 125, 126 and 127 of *The Education Act, 1995*)

Procedure #1

When a school division is disestablished, the districts and the district boards of trustees are also disestablished. New districts must be established in the new school division and elections must be held for the new district boards of trustees, even if there are to be no changes in the schools or the district boundaries.

Procedure #2

If the division being disestablished is not divided into districts, but is to become one or more districts within the division being joined, elections for the new district boards of trustees are required. The board of education of the division being joined establishes the districts and makes the necessary arrangements for elections. The elections are held in accordance with the rules and procedures in *The Local Government Election Act*.

If the division being disestablished is divided into districts, then the provisions outlined under procedure #1 apply.

Transfer

Procedures for elections of district boards of trustees in this situation are similar to procedure #2.

Section 136 of *The Education Act, 1995* allows the electors of any school district to petition the board of education to establish a local school advisory committee for that district rather than a district board of trustees.

Where a school division is created consisting of former urban and former rural school divisions, the urban portion retains its local school advisory committees. In the rural portion, each district can retain a district board of trustees or petition the board of education to establish a local school advisory committee.

c) Membership of Local School Advisory Committees

Existing local school advisory committees can continue to operate as they had previously unless restructuring changes the population attending that particular school. If new local school advisory committees are formed, membership will need to be determined at a well-publicized public meeting.

3. Employees

a) Teacher Local Agreements

(Corresponding legislation: sections 203 and 204 of *The Education Act, 1995*)

Procedure #1

If procedure #1 (school divisions disestablish and establish new division) is used, all teachers who were under contract with the boards of the disestablished divisions automatically continue under contract with the new board on the same terms and conditions. Teachers' contracts of employment are not terminated by the old boards and replaced with new contracts by the new board.

The local collective agreement by which each teacher was covered continues to apply to the teacher until all the teachers employed in the new division negotiate a new local agreement.

Procedure #2, and Transfer

In either of these situations, all teachers who were under contract with the division being disestablished, or the transferring area, automatically continue under contract with the board of the division being joined.

As in procedure #1, the local collective agreement by which each teacher was covered continues to apply to the teacher until all the teachers employed in the new division negotiate a new local agreement.

b) Other Collective Agreements

The Education Act, 1995 does not deal with the status of any employees of existing school divisions other than teachers. Successor rights provisions for other unionized employees of school divisions are covered by *The Trade Union Act*.

Boards must therefore deal with these staff in accordance with the terms of collective agreements and according to *The Trade Union Act*.

c) Contracts of Employment

The Education Act, 1995 does not address the status of any employees of existing school divisions other than teachers. Boards must, therefore, deal with staff, such as directors of education, secretary-treasurers and support staff, in accordance with the terms of individual contracts.

4. Transfer of Assets and Liabilities

(Corresponding legislation: clause 42(1)(g), section 60 and section 118 of *The Education Act, 1995*)

When amalgamation occurs, all assets and liabilities of the disestablished school divisions are assumed by the board of education of the newly established division (in the case of procedure #1) or by the joined division (in the case of procedure #2). For procedure #1, title transfer cannot occur until the elected board of the new school division takes office.

5. Local Education Property Tax

(Corresponding legislation: section 285 of *The Education Act, 1995*)

Under procedure #1 the following applies:

- If the boards of education of the school divisions being disestablished have already set their annual mill rate before amalgamation occurs, those mill rates remain in effect. The legislation recognizes that in this case, there will be a period of time during which the new school division does not have a uniform tax rate.
- If the board of education of the new school division assumes office early in the year, before the previous boards have established mill rates, the new board establishes a mill rate for the new division in the usual manner.
- Tax arrears and current taxes which would have been payable to the disestablished divisions become payable to the new division.

In the case of procedure #2, or transfers, the following apply:

- If the board of the division being disestablished, or the board of the division of which a portion is being transferred, has already set its mill rate for the year before disestablishment or transfer occurs, that mill rate remains in effect after transfer.
- If a division is disestablished, or transfer occurs, before the board has set its mill rate, the board of the division being joined sets the mill rate for the entire division, including the newly annexed area, in the usual manner.
- Tax arrears and current year taxes which would have been payable to the disestablished division, become payable to the division being joined. Tax arrears owing to an area which has been transferred continue to be payable to the division from which the land was transferred.

Note: Legislative amendments are being introduced in the spring of 2002 to allow the board of education of a newly amalgamated school division to set different mill rates for a period of 1 or 2 years following amalgamation, based on the geographic areas of the previously existing divisions. This is an alternative for boards, rather than setting a uniform mill rate immediately for the entire new division.

Appendix E: Communication

The Communication Plan

How, when and what a board of education communicates with its teachers and other employees, partners and residents can add greatly to the public's understanding of the issues and choices that face the board. It is important that the public understand that the objective of restructuring is to maintain or enhance the quality of education and that all decisions should be made with the best interests of children and youth in mind.

Effective communication can assist in generating and maintaining public interest in the process and issues.

Prior to embarking on public discussions, take the time to establish a communication plan. Some steps to consider are to:

- identify issues and challenges:
  - state the issues in clear language (eliminate jargon);
  - provide background information so that people understand the issues; and,
  - provide factual information (both sides of the issue).

- identify all partners and "publics", including:
  - parents;
  - students and other young people;
  - teachers;
  - other employees;
  - district trustees or local school advisory committee members;
  - community members;
  - municipal councils;
  - Aboriginal organizations and communities; and,
  - other school divisions.

- determine methods of communication, including:
  - public meetings;
  - newspaper reports;
  - newsletters;
  - special letters to ratepayers;
  - focus groups;
  - meetings with teachers, support staff, other partner-group representatives, key individuals; and,
  - reports/brochures/pamphlets.

- plan the timing of communication, for example:
  - immediately following board meetings;
  - weekly reports in newspapers; and,
  - regular meetings with district boards of trustees/local school advisory committees and employee organizations.

- consider the importance of informal communication practices:
  - communication as a two-way process:
  - reaction to input (e.g., the openness of trustees to suggestions and opinions of teachers, other employees, other partners including parents and students and the public);
  - policy on open, non-defensive communication; and,
  - non-verbal communication (e.g., gestures, body language).

Consensus Building

Saskatchewan was built on the values of cooperation and collaboration. As you discuss restructuring it will be important to use a consensus building approach in day-to-day operations, as well as during meetings and public events.

Occasionally there will be disagreement. Disagreement can be a good thing. It can help to clarify an issue, open new issues, increase involvement and encourage growth. However, if disagreement is left unresolved, conflict may develop.

The following are suggestions for building consensus:

- build a collaborative climate where everyone's ideas are valued. In this climate, differences in opinion can be dealt with in a constructive and open manner.
- follow principles for consensus building:
  - showing respect for the perspective of others;
  - listening to what others have to say; and,
  - preparing to problem solve.
- keep the discussion focused on the issue.
- establish a dispute resolution procedure to follow if differences of opinion cannot be worked through.
- involve people in defining the issues and ensure that the issues are clearly identified before trying to resolve them.
- problem solve – involve others in finding solutions:
  - encourage a problem solving "attitude" from the outset – looking at the issues in terms of possible solutions, not just the stating of problems;
  - use creative problem solving strategies. Methods of generating ideas for solutions such as "brainstorming" are familiar to many people and can be used in most situations; and,
  - work together.

Appendix F: Sample Request to the Minister of Learning

May 1, 2002

Minister of Learning
Room 302
Legislative Building
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0B3

Dear Minister:

The Boards of Education of A, B, and C School Divisions request that you establish Prairie Grass School Division pursuant to Section 41 of *The Education Act, 1995*. The details of this request follow.

The Disestablishment of the Current School Divisions

Each of the partner boards of education has requested that you disestablish their school division effective December 31, 2003. These letters are appended to this request.

Name of the School Division

The partner boards of education have selected *Prairie Grass School Division* as the name of the new school division.

Governance Structure and Size of the Board of Education

Prairie Grass School Division will have a 7-member board of education. A description of the subdivisions is attached.

Transfer of Assets and Liabilities

The partner boards of education agree to transfer the assets and liabilities of A, B and C School Divisions to Prairie Grass School Division.

Board of Education Taking Office

The members of Prairie Grass School Division Board of Education will take office on January 1, 2004.

Elections

The election of board members of Prairie Grass School Division will take place in October 2003. The returning officer will be the clerk of the urban municipality of Cityville or the secretary-treasurer of School Division A, B or C.

The partner boards of education agree that each board will assume the cost for the polls located in their school division.

Establishment of the New School Division

We request that Prairie Grass School Division be established on September 1, 2003.

The Number of the School Division

Saskatchewan Learning will assign a number to the new school division.

Parent and Community Involvement

The existing boards of trustees of the three school divisions will form the initial base upon which the new Prairie Grass School Division will build local parent and community involvement.

_____ _____

Chairperson of A School Division Chairperson of B School Division

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Chairperson of C School Division

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